2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

FOREWORD

IN the case of an African tribe on which little has been published, the simplest procedure for a field-worker is to write an outline account of the social structure and the chief activities of the people, and afterwards, if the material warrants, to produce more detailed studies of special aspects of the culture. This procedure I have reversed by publishing the present book. I did so for a practical reason. While I was in the midst of writing an introductory monograph on the Bemba of North-Eastern Rhodesia I became a member of the Diet Committee of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, a small group of anthropologists, medical and nutritional experts set up in 1935 to discuss the possible contribution of the ethnological field-worker to the study of nutrition among various African tribes.[1] This was a practical problem for the Institute since it had recently sent out a number of trained anthropologists to make comparative studies in different parts of Africa (Sierre Leone, Gold Coast, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Nyasaland, Rhodesia, and the Union) and it had been suggested that these field-workers, all living in intimate personal contact with the village life of the natives, might be asked to collect quantitative data on the diet of particular African peoples which would be of more value to nutritional science than the purely descriptive material so far recorded.

Research schemes are always difficult to formulate in the abstract, and for this reason it was decided to use as a basis for discussion some data on the diet of the Bemba which I had recently collected under conditions very similar to those we had in mind. The figures were admittedly inadequate, and had never been intended as part of a piece of nutritional research, but other quantitative surveys of the diet of African natives living under tribal conditions practically did not exist, and we had therefore to treat these

[1] The committee was composed as follows: Miss K. Abrahams (Dietician to University College Hospital, London); Miss D. G. Brackett (Secretary of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures); Dr. R. Firth (Reader in Social Anthropology of the London University); Dr. J. L. Gilks (lately P.M.O., Kenya Colony); Dr. F. Kelly (Assistant Director, Imperial Bureau of Animal Nutrition); Dr. R. McCance and Dr. E. M. Widdowson (Pathological Department, King's College Hospital, London); Dr. E. B. Worthington (African Research Survey), and myself.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

preliminary observations on the Bemba dietary as a basis for our discussions of possible methods of field-research.

To this end some Bemba foodstuffs were sent home to England for analysis, and Dr. McCance and Dr. E. M. Widdowson kindly undertook this work at King's College Hospital. Through joint work with them on this concrete data the possibilities of co-operation between anthropologists and nutritional research workers began to take shape. Dr. Widdowson estimated the composition of the Bemba diet roughly on the basis of my preliminary notes,[1] and she has generously allowed me to draw on her work right through this book. Our results are not conclusive as a final statement on Bemba diet problems, but the data revealed certain salient characteristics of primitive dietaries as distinct from our own, and suggested some of the main requirements of nutritional research among peoples living under these particular conditions.

It became evident to us, for instance, that the information required by the nutritional expert was far too detailed for an anthropologist to be able to collect in the course of his general study of tribal organization. It needed long periods of continuous observation, besides special training in methods of weighing and dispatching samples of foodstuffs for analysis. On the other hand I became impressed during two years' work on this committee, and a shorter period serving as a member of the Nutrition Committee of the Economic Advisory Council, with the importance of social and economic factors in determining native diet, especially in the case of societies in which tribal institutions had virtually collapsed in contact with European civilization.

Again and again it appeared in particular cases that methods of storage or distribution, tribal systems of production and co-operation, economic incentives, or traditional attitudes and values in relation to foodstuffs, were at the root of special deficiencies in diet.[2] Anthropological studies of native food habits and their methods of consuming and producing seemed to be essential in any dietetic investigation that might be planned. Yet it was just this type

[1] Already published as an article, 'A Dietary Study in North-Eastern Rhodesia', *Africa*, vol. ix, 1936.

[2] Cf. the work of Fellows of the Institute, e.g. M. and S. L. Fortes, 'Food in the Domestic Economy of the Tallensi', *Africa*, vol. ix, 1936; M. Read, 'Native Standards of Living and African Culture Change', Supplement to *Africa*, vol. xi, no. 3, 1938; also work so far unpublished by Kalervo Oberg among the Banyankole, H. Kuper in Swaziland, and E. H. Ashton in Basutoland.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

121 of material that was least available to those considering nutrition from a practical point of view. Each African Government has its medical, agricultural, and veterinary advisors, but as yet few have appointed departmental experts on the anthropological side.

121 128 This shortage of anthropological data seemed to the Committee to be serious in view of the number of nutritional surveys of African peoples then being planned.[1] It was therefore suggested that it would be instructive if I wrote a short book describing, in the case of one particular tribe, the different sociological factors which directly determined the food-supply. The book grew after the fashion of its kind. I was obliged to include introductory, historical, and general material that should have been published in a preliminary monograph. The value of the work seemed to me to lie in its comprehensive treatment of the subject and the evidence that could be given from any one area of the variety of different factors, whether economic, political, legal, or religious which actually affected the people's diet. The result is in effect a description of the whole economic life of the tribe. I have therefore tried to include such information of the sociological type as the anthropologist will require for comparative purposes, together with data on different activities, such as cooking and gardening, which are more detailed than usually given in ethnographic monographs but which, I think, will be useful to the specialist on the nutrition side. To venture like this on the border-line between two different sciences, biological and social, is an ungrateful task. What pleases one set of experts displeases the other. But if the book gives a broad idea of the extent and variety of nutritional problems in one African society it will have achieved its aim.

From the theoretical point of view the book is an elaboration, on the basis of my own field material, of an earlier student thesis compiled from written documents, in which I tried to prove that hunger was the chief determinant of human relationships, initially within the family, but later in wider social groups, the village, age-grade, or political state. But the emphasis is rather different. In the first book I described the fundamental urge for food as shaping human institutions, and in the second I have given concrete material to show how the biological facts of appetite and diet are themselves shaped by the particular system of human relationships and traditional activities which are standardized in a social group—

[1] Under the stimulus of the Colonial Office inquiry described on p. 2.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

in other words the cultural mechanisms for producing, preparing, and dividing food.

I have gained much since writing the earlier book from recent developments of Professor Malinowski's type of functional analysis of institutions, and in particular his treatment of agriculture in his last book (*Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, 1935). The practical bent of the present work also has led to frequent comparisons between traditional tribal economics and the new products of European industrial organization, and hence to the type of anthropological problem known as 'culture contact' on this side of the Atlantic, and 'acculturation' on the other. On this aspect I also owe much to the stimulus of Malinowski's recent work and to that of many of the Institute Fellows who have tackled similar questions in the field.[1] The American concept of 'culture patterns', with its emphasis on the comparative view-point I have found very stimulating, more especially as outlined recently by R. Linton, R. Benedict, and M. Mead. I cannot accept the criteria used by the last two writers to describe the culture patterns of particular societies, but I hope later to present the main body of my Bemba material in a form which will serve as a basis for comparative work of a rather different type, and in the meantime I have tried in this book to indicate the 'orientation' or 'pattern' of Bemba interests and activities as they affect the consumption or production of food.

The expeditions on which this material was collected were financed by several different Foundations, and to these I must tender very grateful thanks. For my first trip (May 1930–July 1931) grants were made by the Board of Bantu Studies of Capetown University, the Rhodes Trustees, and the Percy Sladen Trust. On my second tour (January 1933–July 1934) I had a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation. To this last body I also owe thanks for assistance in working up my material at the London School of Economics—in particular for the help of Miss Pauline Blackmore, who died tragically of a sudden illness in the middle of the work, and that of Miss Phyllis Kaberry, herself a field-worker with Australian experience, who gave me much expert aid.

In Northern Rhodesia my work would have been quite impossible without the hospitality I was continually given. Miss H. Eastland, the Government native welfare officer at Kasama, let

[1] Cf. *Methods of Study of Culture Contact*, International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Memo XV, 1938.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

living for the most part on perishable foods, and it is their different legal systems and principles of social grouping that enable them to share their supplies between the different members or classes of the community. All these social and economic factors directly affect the production and consumption of food in a native area, although unfortunately in many parts of Africa we have not got even preliminary social and economic studies of the kind described, let alone more detailed investigations of the technical aspects of agriculture or animal husbandry such as would be necessary before any practical improvements in native diets could be planned.

Thus our discussion of the special problems of primitive diet research seems to have led us to two conclusions. In the first instance quantitative studies of native dietaries require the development of new techniques, in particular special methods of estimating the consumption of food and the standards of living among peoples not living on a money economy[1] and also of recording the seasonal changes in diet in those many areas where the alterations from month to month are very great. These are difficulties that will have to be faced, but it is not surprising in the particular circumstances that so few quantitative studies of native dietaries have yet been made, and that most of the nutritional investigations of the African peoples so far published should have been based on the data obtained in hospitals, mining camps, and schools rather than on that collected in the tribal areas themselves.

Secondly, if changes are to be made in diets that are obviously deficient a general knowledge of the tribal structure of the different African peoples is essential as well as more detailed investigations of their economic activities and ambitions, their beliefs, and their habits of using food. This information is for the most part not yet available. To carry out a thorough nutritional survey would therefore require a full team. To the medical, nutritional, agricultural, and other environmental experts, an anthropologist should be added as well. This is a type of joint field-work that has never yet been tried but one which would lead, I think, to the most valuable results.[2] It is for this reason that I publish this book.

[1] Cf. Margaret Read, *Native Standards of Living and African Culture Change*, Institute of African Languages and Cultures Memorandum XVI, 1938, for suggestions along these lines.

[2] Since writing, an experimental expedition of this type composed of a doctor, a nutritional expert, an agricultural officer, and an anthropologist has set out to make a comparative study of the diet and nutritional problems of two Bantu

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

121 It is an attempt to describe in the case of one particular African people—the Bemba of North-Eastern Rhodesia[1]—the different cultural factors that combine to influence the production, distribution, and consumption of food. It is an account of the foodstuffs of a given area, the use the people put them to, their eating customs and prejudices, and their methods of growing, storing, and dividing food. It thus contains an outline of the type of material an anthropologist considers necessary for the study of primitive diet.[2]

The Present Study.

114 The material for the present study was collected during two expeditions to North-Eastern Rhodesia (May 1930–July 1931 and January 1933–July 1934). In both I was engaged on a purely anthropological investigation, but since agriculture is the chief economic activity of the Bemba, and gardening and food their principal topics of talk, it was natural that I should have found myself constantly considering the question of the people's food supply. The social and economic changes in this area produced by the new calls on its labour also necessitated a detailed study of native agricultural methods and domestic economics, as these were affected by the absence of so large a proportion of the adult males. I made constant observations of the people's economic activities, as well as their cooking, distributing, and eating customs, as part of my study of their whole domestic life, and added to the general outline study, which must occupy any anthropologist during the first months of a field trip, many of the detailed observations used in this book. I took daily records of the food eaten by sample families at different times of year,[3] and made notes on the types of cultivation in a great number of individual gardens. I also kept daily calendars of the work of the men and women in two

tribes in Nyasaland under the auspices of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures and the Medical Research Council.

[1] Formerly written 'Awemba'. *Vide* Gouldsbury and Sheane, *The Great Plateau of Northern Rhodesia*, 1911.

[2] It is hoped that this work will be read in conjunction with the report of the Government Ecological Survey of this area now in progress, and that a medical survey of the physique and health of the natives living on this diet may be undertaken later.

[3] With the help of Mrs. Gore-Browne in the first two cases. These records have been published jointly with Dr. E. M. Widdowson, in the article already referred to. 'A Dietary Study in Northern Rhodesia', *Africa*, vol. ix, no. 2, 1937.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

village activities. In the same way, the absence of most of the younger men leads to a crippling kind of depression. Any stranger arriving at a Bemba village will notice at once whether it is a thriving community in which plenty is going on, the huts well kept, and the people keen on their work. In fact, the dead appearance of villages with a large percentage of absent men is one of the most striking features of the country-side.

Thus the 'incorrigible laziness' of the Bemba is due to a whole variety of causes—their physique, history, tradition, the nature of their economic ambitions, their methods of planning their activities, and the type of virtues they admire, as well as changed social conditions over which at present they have little control. All these facts go to make the economic pattern of their daily life, and it is only by watching them at their food, in their gardens, drinking beer, or attending the chief's court that one can try to assess this people's 'will to work'.

To conclude, it is true that the foodstuffs of an African tribe are limited in certain directions by the environment in which it lives, but this work has shown in every chapter the extent to which a particular diet can be determined by purely cultural factors—the network of institutions that enable the people to produce, distribute, and consume their food, the different uses, economic and non-economic, to which edible objects are put, and the system of values that make them rate one food higher than another and work more or less hard to produce their annual supplies. These are the sociological aspects of the diet problem in Africa and other countries, and it is a study of these cultural determinants of food and feeding that can and should be included in a nutritional survey at the present time.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Preface

114 monies. Figurines are also used in the Bemba chisungu; conse-
171 quently Mr. Cory's fine set of photographs of the pottery models is a valuable introduction to the subject of this book. I am grateful for the opportunities he gave me to look at his collection at his house at Mwanza on Lake Victoria, and for many talks I have had with him on the subject.

114 Part of my account of Bemba marriage is derived from a paper published by the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and entitled *Bemba Marriage and Modern Economic Conditions*.[1] Since this paper is now out of print it is difficult for students to refer to it. With the consent of Dr. Clyde Mitchell, the Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, I have included some extracts from it in the text.

104 When I use terms in Cibemba, the language of the Bemba, I employ the current orthography in which the letter C is used for the hard C which is somewhat like 'ch' in English. Since English readers would be in doubt about the pronunciation of the word *cisungu* I have rendered this throughout as 'chisungu'. Following dictionary practice initial vowels of nouns have been omitted.

●121 A generous grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation enabled me to write up this part of my field material. I am much indebted to the Warden and Fellows of Nuffield College who gave me hospitality and provided the secretarial help which allowed me to complete the work.

000 I am, like every ethnographer, grateful for the patient help of tribal informants to whom I refer in the text. I also owe a great deal to Mr. E. Mundy, District Commissioner, Chinsali, during my stay, who gave me much practical assistance.

Professor Leonard Doob of Yale University was kind enough to read my first draft of the book, and Dr. David Schneider, then of the London School of Economics and now of Harvard University, made a number of stimulating suggestions. When the typescript was nearing completion my friend Mrs. E. M. Chilver gave me encouragement that I greatly valued and then took over the book and polished it and prepared it for the press, besides trying to teach me some English grammar. I am very grateful for her help.

[1] A. I. Richards, *Bemba Marriage and Modern Economic Conditions*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 4, 1940.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Introduction

881 The chisungu of the Bemba is usually described either as a puberty rite for girls or as a female initiation ceremony. It consists of a long and rather elaborate succession of ritual acts which includes miming, singing, dancing and the handling of [584] sacred emblems. In the old days the chisungu invariably preceded the marriage of a young girl, and was an integral part of the series of ceremonies by which a bridegroom was united to the [611] family group of his bride, in a tribe in which descent is reckoned through the woman and not through the man, and in which a man [591] comes to live with his wife's relatives at marriage rather than a woman with her husband's.

881 171 Ceremonies similar to the chisungu have been reported from other matrilineal areas of Central Africa. They exist, for instance amongst the tribes most akin to the Bemba, such as the Bisa, Lamba and the Kaonde, as well as amongst the Cewa and the Yao of Nyasaland. They have also been reported from the North-western Province of Northern Rhodesia in the country inhabited by the Ila, the Tonga and the Sala. They occur here and there in the Belgian Congo and Angola.[1] In spite of the wide distribution of these ceremonies however we have, as yet, no full description of any one of them, nor any detailed analysis of the function they appear to fulfil. It would be true to say that, in general, puberty ritual for girls has received rather scant attention in comparison with the very full treatment which has been accorded to the various initiation ceremonies practised for boys.

121 Puberty ritual sets complex problems for the anthropologist. It celebrates the attainment of sex maturity in the boy or the girl, and hence the physical possibility of parenthood. Naturally enough, it reflects tribal attitudes to sex, fertility, marriage and the rearing of children, and expresses, and tries to enforce, the

[1] See Appendix A.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

●121 social obligations of husband and wife, and father and mother.

Puberty is also the moment when full, or nearly full, physical development is reached and when, in the simpler societies, the adolescent is expected to assume full adult activities and responsibilities. In most societies there is some association in people's minds between the notion of sex maturity and that of social maturity, but in those cultures in which puberty ritual is most developed, the coincidence of the two is considered quite specific, and the puberty ritual is either made the occasion of the assumption of adult roles in the political, legal and economic sense, or regarded as the first step in the gradual assumption of a series of such roles. For this reason puberty ritual is described by anthropologists as an 'initiation ceremony', or a 'rite of passage' from one role to another or from one group to another.

This twofold aspect of puberty ceremonies is, to my mind, of great importance, for it gives rise to the variety in the types of ritual which mark this physical event in the life of the boy and girl in primitive societies. One tribe may stress the actual attainment of physical puberty and the magic protection which the first signs of sexual maturity are believed to require. In another, a greater emphasis may be laid on parenthood, and the puberty rites may be predominantly rites of fertility. In other tribes again the ceremonies may have, rather, the character of rites of social maturation and role assumption, and the young individual who passes through them acquires forms of social privilege or becomes a member of an age group with special status and functions. Such an initiation ceremony may, in fact, become so important as a rite of role assumption that it ceases to have any connection with physical maturation, and it is difficult to decide whether the term 'puberty ritual' can properly be applied to it.[1]

As might be expected, nubility, fertility and motherhood tend to be the focus of interest in initiation ceremonies for girls, except where these occur as parallel rites to those of boys as they do among the Nilo-Hamites.

Some of the sentiments expressed in such rites appear to be

[1] For instance some Sotho boys are now initiated at seven or eight years of age, and in general where initiation 'schools' are held and large numbers of boys and girls are initiated together, it is obviously impossible for the rite to coincide with the attainment of physical maturity in the case of each boy.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

almost universal and to arise out of the physical character of the change taking place in the girl.

The universality of menstrual taboos and the fear of the girl's first period struck earlier anthropologists such as Crawley and Frazer so forcibly that they overcame what must have been very strong Victorian reticences on the subject.[1] Blood appears to be the object of a set of emotionally tinged ideas in all human societies. It stands for death, murder, life-giving force or kinship. Menstrual blood with its mysterious periodicity is considered especially terrifying and disturbing, to judge from what we know of primitive ritual. It evokes magic rites for the protection of the girl who thus becomes a potential source of danger to the community for the first time; for those nearest to her it involves purification ceremonies. It makes the girl depend on the older members of the community who can give her this protection, and sometimes she pays for this protection by sufferings which they inflict.

But the blood is also a sign of the woman's creative power. At puberty the girl is first viewed as a possible bearer of children. Adolescence is a time when individuals are tested. Fertility is intensely desired in simpler societies. On approaching puberty boys become subject to fears of impotence, and young people of both sexes consciously long for fatherhood and motherhood and are anxious about their powers to produce children. Hence the common occurrence of fertility magic in puberty ceremonial. Beauty magic is done for the girl and virility rites are undertaken for the boy.[2]

The possibility of pregnancy also affects the treatment of the adolescent girl. Whatever sex relations may have been allowed during adolescence, the intercourse that takes place after puberty is regarded in a different light. Where social structure is mainly based on kinship, the family and lineage desire to ensure that their girls bear children according to the rules of their particular society and are thereby ensured proper protection and support. They want to maintain their rights to their girls' offspring or to some

[1] I do not think that psycho-analysts have yet accounted satisfactorily for the strength of this sense of fear in some primitive societies.

[2] Love magic is not common in societies of this type in which romantic notions of love are not predominant: but fertility magic and magic of virility are both universal as far as we know.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

●121 equivalent in goods and services. Hence the nubility rite at puberty, the rite which makes it possible for the girl to bear children in the socially approved way and to produce children which have legitimate status in the society.

Puberty is also a sign of the final and completed difference between the man's body and the woman's. It is the time when boys and girls assume their full masculine and feminine roles in a primitive society. There are events in puberty ritual which express hostility between the sexes. In many girls' initiation rites, the women, who are bound to be submissive and humble to men at other times, are allowed to be quite outrageous in the ceremony, to swagger, to shout obscenities or to attack the men.[1] There is, almost invariably, a separation of one sex from the other during all or part of the rite.

Rites to strengthen the loyalties between the members of one sex or to provide for the joining of a new group are also widespread. It is common for boys to be separated from their mothers and sisters by some symbolic ritual act, and for girls in patrilineal societies to be separated from their own families in order to join those of their husbands.[2]

These are examples of emotional attitudes that are associated with the period of social maturation, a period when the boy or girl longs for independence yet dreads to leave the particular dependence, on mother, father or extended family head, to which he or she has become accustomed; and when parents themselves are proud of their grown children but are doubtful as to whether they are, after all, fit for their new responsibilities as adults, and perhaps jealous of the challenge of the new generation. Hence the occurrence in puberty rituals of magic tests or ordeals of maturity as well as ceremonies in which parents or their age-mates exact suffering in return for new privileges, circumcise the young boys, bewail the loss of their children, bury them ritually, cut them away symbolically, make them jump over hurdles, or other barriers, or

[1] Cf., M. Gluckman, 'The role of the sexes in Wiko circumcision ceremonies' in *Social Structure*, Studies presented to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, edited by Meyer Fortes, 1949.

[2] Cf., Van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage*, 1905, J. Frazer, 'The Golden Bough': a study in *Magic and Religion*, 1890, and E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, 1902, for comparative material on these points.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

otherwise convince themselves that their offspring have become full adults and are fit to be so considered, and that they have joined the new groups which they have to join.

From the stuff of such universal emotional attitudes are formed the particular tribal ceremonies which embody the characteristic features which fascinate the anthropologist. Many of these ritual acts I have listed occur in the Bemba chisungu, but it has special aspects which seem to be related to the economic activities of this tribe, to its social values and to its social structure, and in particular to the fact that the Bemba are a matrilineal people practising matrilocal marriage. Anthropologists have long been interested in typologies of ritual, and there is much in the way of typological work to be done in the field of puberty ritual since anthropologists are still using terms and concepts developed in an article written by Van Gennep in 1905. They are also interested in ceremonial as a reflection of the beliefs, the desires and the tensions and conflicts evident in a particular tribe.

Political and economic values are also 'taught' at puberty ceremonies and for this reason it is necessary, in order to understand their meaning, to have a background of knowledge of the social structure of the tribe concerned and of its dominant social values. This is particularly the case with regard to the Bemba chisungu, which is one of the tribe's two major sequences of ritual, and expresses many fundamental beliefs and values besides those specifically concerned with marriage.

As a preface to this account of the chisungu ceremony I propose therefore to give a summary outline of Bemba culture. This will include an account of Bemba environment and economic activities, and of the values associated with these; of their system of social grouping, and the political and other structural values on which it is based; of their institutions relating to sex, marriage and parenthood, and the beliefs and attitudes connected with these. These will be described here mainly from the woman's point of view and not, as I have previously described them, from the man's.[1]

[1] For more detailed accounts see my 'Mother-right among the Central Bantu' in *Essays presented to C. G. Seligman*, 1933; *Bemba Marriage and Modern Economic Conditions*, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Paper No. 4, 1940; and 'Some types of family structure among the Central Bantu' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, edited by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde, 1950.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Introduction

●|2| I am aware that there are methodological pitfalls in the use of ritual to throw light on a particular social structure, an institution or a set of ideas. Something about Bemba marriage and kinship must be known in order that the chisungu ritual can be understood; yet anthropologists analyse such rituals in order to throw light on the ideology and institutions of sex and parenthood. This tendency is dangerous; it is not uncommon to find statements in an anthropological work that a ritual exists because lineage sentiment is so strong, and later in the same work, the statement that the function of the ritual is to promote the cohesion of the lineage. But in fact, both these processes are, to a certain extent, going on simultaneously. In terms of field observation, anthropologists constantly find themselves working from structure to ritual, and ritual to structure. They go to the ceremony with a certain background of knowledge of the culture, but the symbolic behaviour they see often suggests new relationships. A song or a chance remark may make them suddenly aware of a tension between the men and the women of the society, or between the man's and the woman's family, of which they had not been aware. It is for this reason that I believe that an analysis of the chisungu ritual should take into account facts and relationships in Bemba culture that were omitted in the more straightforward institutional descriptions. I shall offer, in the first chapter, the kind of cultural outline I had made for myself before I witnessed the ceremony; next, a deeper analysis of the ideas and structural tensions revealed by the rite, and lastly an examination of the mechanism of the chisungu in relation to other systems of enforcing sex, marriage and other tribal norms.

This detailed account of a particular ceremony observed in North-eastern Rhodesia in 1931 will, I hope, throw further light on the kinship structure and the educational system of the Bemba and suggest hypotheses to be tested in the case of other puberty rites for girls. It will also, I hope, add to the growing total of our ideas about the social function of ritual itself.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

PART III

The Interpretation of the Ceremony

☆

METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

•121 The anthropologist struggling to interpret a complex ceremony has to use a number of different approaches.

Expressed purposes (Primary)

His first step is obviously to ask the performers what they think they are achieving by their ritual behaviour and to summarize as accurately as possible the different views of the members of the community on these points. Such explanations may be called the *expressed* or *formulated* purposes of the rite, and it is important, to my mind, to distinguish very clearly from the outset what is said by the believers about a ritual act and what is deduced by the observer. There is certainly a good deal of variation in the extent to which people are able to formulate the objectives of their ritual. Some ceremonies are apparently performed with short-term ends which are clearly conceived and easily expressed. 'We do this to make childbirth easy' or 'to make the rain fall' for instance. Other symbolic acts may be performed with much more generalized objectives.[1] People will say they are carrying out a rite to ask for the blessings of the ancestors, to bring general good luck or happiness, or just 'to please the Gods'. They may believe that they can produce by their behaviour a desired condition of mind, or a harmonious system of relations. 'We do this to bring peace to the village' they may say; or 'to take anger from men's hearts'.

[1] Malinowski's distinction between magic and religious behaviour is mainly based on a distinction between short- and long-term objectives.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Methods of Interpretation

It is obvious that a complete interpretation of every act in a ceremony is unlikely to be given by the whole community or even by the ritual experts in it. The nature of ritual, as I hope to show, demands that there should be multiple explanations for most of the forms of symbolic behaviour which compose it. But since rites are, to my mind, invariably an effort to 'do'—to change the undesirable, or to maintain the desirable, I believe that there is always some purpose, however general, behind a ceremony which the performers can, and will, express. In our society a man will tell us that he is going to church to marry Miss Brown although he may be quite unable to explain the symbolism of the different ritual acts which contribute to this end. In the cultures more usually studied by the anthropologist even the statement that 'We do this because our ancestors did it' may be an expression of some purpose or end.

Primary purposes of this kind may be single or multiple. For instance it may be quite clearly recognized by the performers that a rite has several objects. The *ncwala* ceremony of the Swazi is stated by the people to strengthen the king; to test the courage of a new regiment of young men; and to make the people free to eat the first fruits without harmful effects, besides producing many other results observed by the anthropologist and not by the performers themselves.[1] Such multiple purposes are characteristic of puberty ritual, as I have shown earlier.

Expressed or formulated purposes can be derived from an analysis of statements of dogma known to the whole community or to its ritual specialists; from comments and explanations heard in the course of inquiry, and perhaps from argument with informants; or from casual remarks which are made during the performance of the ceremony itself. There is obviously much individual variation within a given community as to the knowledge of the purposes of a ceremony, general or particular, which a man may possess. One purpose behind the rite may be known to the whole community, while another is esoteric knowledge, or information that is so detailed that only very intelligent members of the society, or ritual specialists, are able to verbalize it in answer to a question. The Archbishop of Canterbury does not give the same account of the meaning of the Holy Eucharist as

[1] Cf. Hilda Kuper, *An African Aristocracy, passim*, 1947.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

●121 the verger who watches at the church door, the worshipper in the Church or the young boy or girl who has just been confirmed. Again some ritual symbols are easily interpreted because they are formulated in a stereotyped way in that particular society; while others require thought and abstract generalization and the power to grasp the inquirer's point of view. The field worker knows the difference between the informant who really enjoys abstract thought, and the one who quickly gives up the attempt with the muttered statement that this rite is done because 'it is dangerous not to do it'.[1]

Earlier anthropologists were content with giving one or two accounts of a ceremony taken from the lips of one informant. Recent work on ritual has improved in detail in that it is usually based on direct observations and the comments of specialists together with as many non-specialist informants as possible.[2] The experiments of Kluckhohn and others have shown us how far the numerical analysis of individual views can be carried if sufficient time is available and a sufficient number of ceremonies witnessed.[3] I myself only attended one chisungu, and since I was single-handed I could not record all the remarks made by the participants as well as take photographs and note the words of songs. I had to resign myself to getting salient features of the rite rather than individual variations in belief, and this is what most anthropologists probably do during their first trip, with more or less care expended in the doing.

Expressed purposes (Secondary)

Expressed purposes may also include secondary as well as primary motives. For instance people may say that their object in doing such and such acts is to give their daughter in marriage but they may also recognize that the ceremony itself gives them prestige, binds their relatives to return them economic services, or raises their credit in the community. Initiation ceremonies have

[1] It must be remembered that men tend to formulate beliefs and ethical codes in times of change; they do not commonly express them when these are unchallenged. Bemba society was going through rapid social and economic change during my visit.

[2] R. Firth, *The Work of the Gods in Tikopia*, 1940, gives very detailed records of such observations and statements.

[3] Clyde Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*, 1944.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

sometimes been reintroduced into societies where they had lapsed because they have brought chances of earning money and prestige to their promoters under modern conditions. These motives may be perfectly clearly formulated by the people concerned, although they are secondary in the sense of being contingent on the first.

Deduced purposes

But beliefs and objectives can also be deduced from indirect evidence. We may be able to deduce the importance of a symbolic act or the nature of the performer's emotional reaction to it—their interest, tension or boredom, for instance; and it is for this reason that I have recorded as carefully as possible the emotional attitudes which seem to be expressed in the ceremony I witnessed. Another method is to analyse different texts describing the rites in the hope of finding some common stress or revelation of interest. It may be possible to make some kind of statistical estimate of the recurrence of particular symbolic acts; or the repetition of statements of belief. Ceremonies which the performers absolutely refuse to leave out can reasonably be assumed to have more significance than those that are slurred over or omitted, and the preceding account gives instances of laborious work which the mistress of the chisungu ceremonies refused to shorten under any circumstances. Similarly, we can deduce that a ritual act in an African religion which is quickly abandoned in response to a European prohibition, or to the appeal of another faith such as Christianity or Mohammedanism, must be based on a less fundamental belief than one which still continues to be performed after long contact with other civilizations.

Lastly, the meaning of a vital act may perhaps be deduced by an analysis of other ceremonies performed by the same community in which an identical or similar act occurs.[1]

The anthropologists' interpretations of religion and magic are naturally based largely on sociological concepts, and they tend to emphasize the function of ritual in maintaining a particular institution, such as the family, or a reciprocal exchange system,

[1] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's account of the meaning of particular Andaman beliefs is almost entirely based on an analysis of this kind. Cf. *The Andaman Islanders*, 1922.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

● |2| such as the Kula ring. They also stress the importance of religious rites in expressing the norms of a tribe as a whole. In some cases too they have pointed out that practical results may follow from the performance of a rite which has some quite other ostensible purpose. Modern anthropologists have been less interested in the function of religious rites in relation to the individual's needs and emotions.[1]

The following types of explanations of ritual behaviour are commonly offered. First a ceremony can be described in relation to the common norms and values of a given tribe and its notions of causality. Thus a ritual in connection with a particular institution can very well be examined in relation to the ethical codes and laws governing that institution, the social group involved and the activities it carries out. For instance the different ritual acts in a funeral ceremony may be analysed in relation to the performer's dogma as to life in the after world, myths about the origin of the people concerned, the obligations binding the patrikin and matrikin of the dead man and his affinal relatives or the economic exchanges carried out between them.

The most commonly accepted view of the sociological functions of ritual is that this type of religious behaviour expresses, make public, reinforces, or teaches tribal norms. This view is epitomised in Radcliffe-Brown's statement that a society exists because it is united by common social sentiments and that these sentiments must be constantly maintained at a given intensity.[2] It follows that in the case of a given institution the anthropologist should ask how far the values and beliefs he believes to govern the activities and relations of a particular group are actually expressed or symbolized in their rites. In the case of the chisungu ceremony, for instance, we shall ask how far the relations between husband and wife, as they are enforced by law, extolled in fable, and otherwise represented as desirable by the community are also symbolized in the ceremony.

[1] This apparent lack of interest in the individual is probably due to the lack of sufficient time to study individual reactions in a single field trip. Radin, Lowie and other American anthropologists have presented material of this sort in the form of autobiographies of Indians who saw visions or went into trances, and Malinowski and Firth have always described ritual from both the social and the individual angles.

[2] Cf. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Andaman Islanders*, 1922, p. 264.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Methods of Interpretation

But anthropologists also tend to see the values of the tribe as forming some kind of system, whatever inconsistencies and contradictions there may be within the system.

Consequently they look for the expression of general norms of behaviour or beliefs about the world in any important series of religious ceremonies. It is more than likely that mortuary ritual may symbolize the performers' duty to their chief or the values they set on different economic activities as well as grief for the dead man whom they praise in their lamentations. The correspondence between the total values system of a tribe and its symbolic expression in ritual is never exact. Some basic values, that is, ideals held by the whole tribe seem to be dramatically represented; others are not. Little exact comparison of the rites and the values has ever been made, largely because anthropologists are still without a useful method of classifying tribal values in a way which would make systematic examination easy. The experiment is, nevertheless, worth making if only because it may lead them to formulate hypotheses as to the type of values and beliefs which are most frequently expressed in ritual, and those which are not. It may even make it possible, after much further work, to detect some correlations between types of social structure and types of ritual.

Similar explanations of the function of ritual are those which state, often quite categorically, that religious ceremonies exist to promote the social cohesion of the group. The emphasis here is not on any particular institution in a society or on a set of values rooted in its political, economic or domestic activities but on the importance of maintaining some feeling of unity in a group.

Such types of explanation followed closely on Durkheim's stimulating and vivid reconstruction of what he imagined a totemic ceremony to be among some of the Australian Aborigines and the function such a rite may perform in promoting group consciousness or the individual sense of becoming part of a larger whole.[1] Later observations have shown that important ceremonials are just as often occasions of group division as of union,[2]

[1] E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, 1912, cf. also A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *op. cit.* and E. E. Evans Pritchard, 'The Dance', *Africa*, vol. I, 1928.

[2] See my *Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe*, 1932, p. 71.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

● 121 and communities at such times split into clan, lineage or affinal groups or give a public display of an order of precedence. Simple membership of the group or sentiments of union are not the only ones displayed. It is in this way that structural interpretations of ritual have recently been given.[1]

For such hypotheses there is rarely any possible verification, unless a senior member of the society openly asserts that the rites promote loyalty, or unless it is found that there are two areas in one of which the ceremony is held and the other not, and that these can be compared. It is reasonable to assume that any form of joint activity makes for closer ties between members of a society who meet face to face; an important ceremony may be the occasion of the largest gathering which a man in a primitive society ever attends. However, anthropologists have shown a tendency to argue that a group experiences intensified loyalty because it has attended a ceremony, and that the ceremony exists because the group has such strong feelings that it insists on holding one—a circular argument.

Later, the emphasis on religion as an expression of group cohesion led some anthropologists to explain ritual as a symbolic representation of social tensions as well as of social harmony. The more detailed the analysis of social structure became, the more frequently were tensions seen to exist between one group and another or one social role and another.

Here the anthropologist has relied heavily on the psycho-analytical hypotheses. The hypothesis that the individual finds compensation for the frustrations or conflicts in his situation in the symbolism of dreams was early extended by psycho-analysts to the ritual field. The religious rite according to such views provides a symbolic solution for particular emotions which are either universal or else inherent in a particular social system.

Anthropologists interested in social structure—and they have been in the majority of recent years—have started to explain forms of ritual which seemed surprising or quite at variance with the social values of the tribe, as ritual expressions of hostilities which have to be repressed in daily life, or as symbolic compensations for the unpleasant roles which society may assign to an

[1] See the work of M. Fortes, M. Gluckman, and E. R. Leach.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

individual or a group. Thus Bateson's ingenious analysis of the Naven ceremonies on the Iatmul islands suggests that the transvestism which occurs there can be explained in terms of the woman's desire to swagger for once as a man as a compensation for her submissive role in everyday life. Gluckman interprets a rain rite among the Zulu in which women dress up as men, carry shields, and behave obscenely and aggressively in somewhat the same way.[1]

All these conjectures cannot be proved until we have far more complete data from different areas. We do not know for instance whether the groups in question feel the tensions we impute to them, although this could probably be examined in terms of legal cases, witch-craft accusations or perhaps by means of psychological tests. Psychological interpretations are bound to be of the heads-you-win, and tails-you-lose type. If a woman behaves submissively in ritual, the explanation offered is that she is expressing the sex role that is proper to a woman in a society in which meekness in women is admired; if she swaggers the explanation is that she is reacting from this submissive role.

Lastly, ritual may have a number of practical effects which are not at all intended by the performers and of which they or the majority of them are not aware. Malinowksi points out that the series of gardening rites among the Trobriand islanders serves to organize very effectively the different stages of their agricultural work. Firth has shown that the seasonal taboos of bird snaring among the Maori are explained in religious terms but that they also give protection to the birds during the breeding season. The Bemba themselves say that they wait for the blessings of their chiefs before cutting their gardens because they believe that otherwise they would lack the goodwill of their ancestral spirits. The European observer, however, regards this ceremony as a useful device for securing that the gardens are cut at an advantageous time of the year from the point of view of weather and temperature. Such 'pragmatic' effects (to use the term as Malinowski has done so fruitfully, in his analysis of different forms of Trobriand magic) should certainly be distinguished from the

[1] G. Bateson, *Naven*, 1936, and M. Gluckman, 'Zulu women in hoe culture ritual', *Bantu Studies*, vol. IX, 1935.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

●121 expressed purposes of the people concerned. The latter is a system of ideas, and the former a result of social action which may not appear clearly to the anthropologist until he has examined the effects of a number of rites.

In a sense all the types of anthropological interpretations just listed can be described as pragmatic since they are based on the argument that people carry out religious rites because they fulfil some function for the individual, the society as a whole, or the groups of which it is composed; because, in short, they satisfy a need.

Lastly it is important to study ritual as a teaching device in relation to general methods of education in the society; of the public proclamation of legal obligations in ritual in relation to the other means of enforcing such duties; and to an examination of the different ritual acts as a means of giving confidence to individuals or groups.

I will advance explanations of all these different kinds in the case of the chisungu.

EXPRESSED PURPOSES OF THE CHISUNGU

X881 829 *Primary.* When questioned directly as to why they need to dance the chisungu for their girls, most older Bemba speak with the utmost energy. It is quite clear that the rite is intended to do something, and to do something that is felt to be most necessary and important. Men as distinct from women do not know, or are not supposed to know, the subsidiary purposes of the rite, but they speak in general terms. They say that of course the rite is necessary. No one would want to marry a girl who had not had her chisungu danced. She would not know what her fellow women knew. She would not be invited to other chisungu feasts. She would just be a piece of rubbish (*cipele*); an uncultivated weed (*cangwe*); an unfired pot (*citongo*); a fool (*cipumbu*) or just 'not a woman'. They lay emphasis on the preparation of the girl for marriage and for a change of status. Men know the magic dangers to which a girl becomes subject at puberty, but it would not be proper for them to express them. Their answers, often given with

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Unconscious Tensions and Conflicts

Such suggestions cannot be dignified by the name of hypotheses. They are no more than likely guesses. It remains for the sociologist to follow them up in similar societies, and for the psycho-analyst to interpret them in terms both of universal symbolism and the analysis of Bemba dreams and other expressions of unconscious fantasies or conflicts.

PRAGMATIC EFFECTS

The intentions, conscious or unconscious, of the performers of a rite must be carefully distinguished from the actual effects they may produce, either on the state of mind of individuals, or on the working of particular institutions. The Trobriand islanders practise love magic in the firm belief that the saying of certain words or the use of certain herbs makes a man invincibly attractive to a woman, or a woman to a man. The magic itself does not produce this effect, of course, but the fact is that lovers who believe themselves to be irresistible act in such a way that they actually prove to be so. All types of ritual can be similarly regarded as social mechanisms which produce certain results in the individual or the group, quite apart from the manifest or latent content of the performer's beliefs. It is as a social mechanism that the ritual of different cultures shows such similarities. Symbols differ widely, so do beliefs, and there is an almost bewildering variety of ceremonial sequences, but as methods of social action ritual types are not in reality very numerous, and they will be found to conform to certain general rules.

From this point of view we can distinguish in the chisungu a number of ritual devices that are very widespread, and which here produce effects on the individual girl, on her kindred, and on the institution of marriage, and in the maintenance of Bemba values. The first of these may be described as the device of the 'marked stage' which seems to me typical of all rites of role assumption. For whatever conscious or unconscious reasons, the Bemba girl and her family approach the time of puberty with apprehension and anxiety. The series of ceremonial acts of her chisungu may be regarded as giving her the assurance that she is fit to assume her

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

x 881 622 769 due permission. The common people hope and believe that the rites have been performed for them; they do not think that they themselves have a part to play as worshippers. There are secret elements in the nubility rites, but they are mysteries of interpretation and linguistic usage rather than ceremonies carried on behind barred doors. The main features of a chisungu on the other hand are its crowds and its thronging dancers. Again the ancestral ceremonies are performed in a reverent and quiet way. Nothing could be in greater contrast than the spirit of the chisungu with its noisy dancing and singing, its extravagant burlesque and its crowded scenes. The chisungu proclaims and teaches and requires a big concourse for its effect: it repeats, reaffirms and hands on by emblem and mime. The ancestral prayers are supplications to spirits who can give and withhold. The approach to them is difficult and can only be made by men in authority who have made themselves ritually pure. If Bemba believe in chiefs at all, they believe that they are worshipping chiefs acting as intermediaries for them, because that is their concept of kingship. They do not need to watch the rite of supplication itself.

• 121 I have tried to find explanations for an elaborate set of rites. They were ceremonies performed by people of a culture that was strange to me and in a language which I did not understand thoroughly enough for an adequate study of verbal symbols. The task has been one which no anthropologist could hope to achieve completely, but it extended my knowledge of Bemba institutions and values and set me, and I hope others, problems for comparative study in other matrilineal tribes. It has given me a conception of the great variety of different purposes which men seek to achieve by ritual behaviour.

I have interpreted the functions of the chisungu ritual from a number of points of view. I have taken it as given that some of the emotions associated with growing up in human society are universal, although they are expressed in a variety of different ritual forms. I have shown that the rites perform a particular function for Bemba society, for the different groups of which it is composed, such as the matrilineages and the extended family, and also for the individual actors in the ceremony—the girls chivvied here and there under their covering blankets, the anxious mothers waiting

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

for them to jump over the faggots, and the commanding organizers of the rites. Some of my explanations are based on sociological assumptions and some on psychological ones. I have not been able to draw neat boundaries between the two.

The emotional and intellectual needs of individuals, as they are conditioned by the society in which they are brought up, seem to me a proper study for social anthropologists, as proper as the analysis of institutionalized roles, social relationships or social groups on which so much emphasis has been laid recently. The one cannot be studied without the other. If the observations made here under the title of 'pragmatic effects' mean anything, they point to the number and variety of emotional attitudes which can be expressed by symbolic behaviour and the multiple, and often changing, functions of such rites. Single explanations of ritual behaviour, however satisfying to the observer, seem to me to deny the nature of symbolism itself and its use in human society to express the accepted and approved as well as the hidden and denied, the rules of society and the occasional revolt against them, the common interests of the whole community and the conflicting interests of different parts of it. The use of symbols in ritual secures some kind of emotional compromise which satisfies the majority of the individuals who compose a society and which supports its major institutions.

4:Whiteley E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA

FOREWORD

122 The preparation of a comprehensive survey of the tribal societies of Africa was discussed by the Executive Council of the Institute as far back as 1937, but the interruption and restricting of its activities caused by the war resulted in the postponement of the project. Events and developments during recent years, however, have led to a wider recognition of the need for collating and making more generally available the wealth of existing but uncoordinated material on the ethnic groupings and social conditions of African peoples, particularly in connection with plans for economic and social development. Moreover, it appeared that the International African Institute, as an international body which has received support from and performed services for the different Colonial governments, was in a very favourable situation for undertaking such a task.

The Institute, therefore, in 1944, applied to the recently established British Colonial Social Science Research Council for a grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to finance the preparation of an Ethnographic Survey of Africa, and a grant was allocated for a period of five years from 1945, and was subsequently extended for a further period of three years. A committee, under the Chairmanship of Professor Radcliffe-Brown, was appointed to consider the scope and form of the survey, and collaboration was established with research institutions in South Africa, Rhodesia, East Africa, French West Africa, Belgium and the Belgian Congo.

● 121 The aim of the Ethnographic Survey is to present a concise, critical, and accurate account of our present knowledge of the tribal groupings, distribution, physical environment, social conditions, political and economic structure, religious beliefs and cult practices, technology and art of the African peoples. The material is to be presented as briefly and on as consistent a plan as possible, and the text will be supplemented by maps and comprehensive bibliographies.

The Ethnographic Survey is being published as a series of separate, self-contained studies, each devoted to one particular people or cluster of peoples. It is hoped that publication in this form will make the results more quickly and readily available to those interested in specific areas or groups. A list of the sections which have already appeared is given on the cover of this volume.

Since the unequal value and the generally unsystematic nature of the available information constituted a chief reason for undertaking this survey, it will be obvious that the material here presented can make no claim to be complete or definitive. Every effort has been made, however, to scrutinise all available literature and to check it by reference to unpublished sources and to workers actually in the field; thus it is intended to present a clear picture of our existing knowledge and to point out the directions in which the need for further studies is most pressing. Any assistance from those who are in a position to remedy deficiencies and correct inaccuracies by providing supplementary material will be greatly appreciated.

[p. iii]

6: Brelsford G-5 (ca. 1940) 1944 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Preface.

Since I completed this paper Chitimukulu Kanyanta has died, in August, 1943. At least a year will pass after the death before a successor begins to inherit, and, as Mwamba too has been dangerously ill for some time, it is likely that there will be great changes of personnel throughout the main lines of Bemba chieftainships within the next year or so. The inheritance of a big chieftainship sometimes takes as long as two years. This gives ample time for the resolving of any personal or tribal disputes and some are sure to occur. The claims of the third branch of the clan will, on this occasion, cause some debate.

The fact that Kanyanta has died does not affect the discussions in this paper. For it is the principles and the precedents of succession that I have tried to emphasise, and the usefulness of this work will extend, I hope, far beyond the deaths of existing chiefs. Much has been written about the Bemba but no full and thorough study of the succession of chiefs has yet been published. But the tribe is the largest in Northern Rhodesia and the typical movement of chiefs from one district to another on succession is a factor that affects the work of officials of many departments. So that though the subject may make dull reading its importance to Government justifies a detailed study.

It is necessary to say something of the attached genealogical table. The table compiled by the late E. H. B. Goodall was prepared in 1910–12. It is a thorough piece of work but it is eleven feet long and thus unsuitable for reproduction in this paper. A smaller edition was prepared during the Willis enquiry in 1924. The table I give here is adapted from this latter one with amendments to bring it up to date. It deals only with the present lineage. District Note Books and works by Missionaries contain many long lists of Chitimukulus but no one list agrees with another about the number of Paramounts that have reigned since the dim past. Since this is a modern discussion and not a historical study the restriction of the table to the verified and known chiefs of the present lineage is adequate. The Paramount just deceased was thus Chitimukulu VIII of the present lineage, though some writers would make him the thirty-second of present and traditional history.

The letter and figure following each proper name in this paper are given for ease of reference to the corresponding line and place in the genealogical table.

I am most grateful for the help and comments of Father Etienne of the White Fathers Missions. He is an expert of many years standing on the Bemba and his assistance has been invaluable to me in clarifying the principles of succession.

I must also thank Dr. Max Gluckman, the Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute for important criticisms and suggestions on the earlier draft of this paper.

W. V. Brelsford,
District Officer.

Luwingu,
March, 1944.

622 influence and upon the discretionary alterations of descent, and they always
645 come back again on to the main line, at least as regards the royal clan, after any short dash up a side line that has been made necessary by influence or by politics.

•121 Government at the moment cannot follow all these threads, and at least once in the past an enquiry had to be held to disentangle them. This was in 1924 and I understand that it took Mr. Willis, the Provincial Commissioner, Kasama, nearly nine months to collect the evidence and give a ruling as to who should be Chitimukulu VIII. The object of this paper then is to provide an administrative guide not only to what should happen normally, but also to point out moves that contain the germs of future complications. I deal very fully with the principles of succession so that when the present holders of chieftainships are dead the traditional rules expounded here can still be consulted. I also point out tendencies that might simplify and stabilise the succession to the Paramountcy if the Superior Native Authority ever come to consider such objectives. Finally I indicate which are traditionally the least important of the chieftainships, as this has a bearing on the present Government policy of encouraging the abolition of redundant posts.

643 There is not one direct line of promotion through all Bemba chieftainships culminating in the Paramountcy, but there are several distinct branches even in the royal lines, and some of them are not usually connected by way of interchange of personnel. Some branches of the royal clan are for practical purposes complete in themselves, but there are others which are connected one with the other. No wonder the system is involved.

622 There are at the moment of writing 32 Bemba chiefs acknowledged by Government, and most of them are subject to change and promotion along one of the several branches of chieftainship.

611 Descent and succession are matrilineal. The totem of the Paramount
622 and other chiefs descended from sisters of Paramounts is the crocodile, and these men are known as *Mwinang'andu* (sing). I refer to them simply as the royal Chiefs. But some of the most materially important chieftainships of to-day are not held by *Benang'andu* (plural) and there are grown-up men of royal blood working on the mines and elsewhere who will never hold a Bemba chieftainship. The fact of belonging to the royal clan makes a man eligible for a chieftainship, but whether he gets one depends upon whether he is born of a senior royal sister. For there never were enough chieftainships to go round all the clan. I use the word sister frequently as a matter of convenience but the word mother represents the ultimate test. A man takes his seniority from his mother, consequently in a large clan it is only the sons of senior *namfumu* (mothers of chiefs) who can expect to get a chieftainship.

By senior I mean genealogically senior: that is, relative nearness to the mothers on the main vertical line to the left of the table and then closeness of position along the horizontal line of brothers and cousins of the same generation.

This point will become clearer as we go on. Succession is traced from *namfumu* to *namfumu* and the order of precedence is the order of the mother. The sons of a senior *namfumu* are senior to those of a junior *namfumu* although the sons of the latter may be older in years. The various branches of the clan each start with a woman whose brothers are royal

chiefs, hence my use of the word sister to define a branch of the clan. It is essential to stress that the words senior and junior refer to the genealogical position of the sister or *namfumu* and to her closeness to the earlier mothers and sisters. The word sister is particularly apt as the succession of the *namfumu* is from sister to sister when possible or to a classificatory sister, i.e., first cousin. 611 622

For the benefit of scholars I would insist before going on that this is not a complete history of Bemba chieftainship. I try to deal only with present day successions and I insert only sufficient recent history to explain why certain moves were made, or in order to indicate what should happen in the future. A minimum of tribal history is necessary to prove certain points. 121

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

642 171

built up a new state. We find tribes called after the name of the original leader of the nuclear community[1] (e.g. the Zulu, or the lineage groups of North Basutoland loosely described as Bamoheng, or Bamoketela): and others called after his clan (e.g. Kwena, Mangwato). The descendants of the first chief's clan may form a ruling caste (e.g. Zulu, Swazi, Bemba), and the total number of clans in the tribe may be arranged in order of precedence based on the tradition of the original migration into the area, or else the degree of relationship with the descent group of the chief.[2] The next of kin of the chief may play a definite part in the political organization, may claim rights to territorial chieftainships or villages, membership of tribal councils or smaller advisory bodies (e.g. the council formed by the chief's brother, sister, and near relatives among the Venda), or they may act as a regency council at the chief's death (e.g. Venda, Tswana, Swazi).

642 171 121

These then seem to be common features of Bantu political organization—the position of the chief as head of a community held together by bonds, real or fictitious, of kinship and as priest of an ancestral cult, and a political structure based on the dominance of a leading family line or clan. It is the differences in the machinery of government and in the incidence of tribal authority within this common pattern that make the interest of a comparative work like the present. In examining a particular case, there are a number of different conditioning factors which seem to account for these variations in political structure. Of these the most obvious appear to be the following: (*a*) the length of time the tribe has inhabited its present territory; (*b*) the type of immigration, whether by peaceful penetration, ejection of other units or their amalgamation;[3] (*c*) the emphasis placed on different prin-

[1] Schapera uses this term to describe a ruling group which has conquered and finally amalgamated other peoples often of foreign stock (cf. p. 57).

[2] cf. the heirarchy of Ganda clans: the precedence observed in tasting first-fruits in order of clan seniority among the Sotho peoples, and the respect still accorded to the Zulu and Swazi clans that have split off from the original royal stock, when it became necessary to contract marriages between members of one house.

[3] Compare the differences in size and homogeneity between single tribes largely of one stock with a single paramount chief (Swazi, Bemba); the congeries of small autonomous tribelets with similar cultural features but no supreme head (the swamp peoples of north-eastern Rhodesia or the low-veld tribes of northern Transvaal); or the amalgamation of a number of different ethnic groups into one empire by conquest or absorption (the old Luba Empire of the Congo, or that of the Zulu under Shaka or the Basotho under Moshesh).

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

ciples of social grouping such as descent, age, sex differences, or local ties by which the tribe may be integrated and the incidence of authority determined; (*d*) the economic bases of the people's activities which affect their degree of dispersal, the form of leadership required, and the economic values associated with political prerogatives; (*e*) the type of foreign rule to which the tribe is subject and the European elements that are effecting its political development, i.e. variations in policy from the administrative system known as Indirect Rule in Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Uganda, to the more direct government by the white man in South Africa or the attempts made to create new political institutions for Natives, such as the Bunga system of the Transkei.

All these factors will be found to account for differences in political organization among a number of the kindred peoples known as the Bantu, and I shall try to analyse the Bemba system along these lines.

II. The Bemba Tribe

(*a*) *Tribal Composition.* The Bemba tribe at present inhabits the Tanganyika plateau of north-eastern Rhodesia, between the four great lakes—Tanganyika to the north-east, Nyassa to the east, and Mweru and Bangweolu to the north-west and west respectively. They number to-day about 140,000, very sparsely scattered over the country at a density of an average 3·75 per square mile.

The Bemba trace their origin to the area now known as the Belgian Congo and declare that they were originally an offshoot from the great Luba people which inhabits the Kasai district. The fact that the first ancestor of the Bemba is known as Citi Muluba ('Citi the Luban') substantiates this tradition, together with the cultural similarities still noted between the two peoples and the fact that Luban words, no longer understood by the Bemba commoner, are still used as part of the religious ritual at the paramount chief's court. The legends of immigration are numerous and circumstantial. The first arrivals apparently crossed the Lualaba River, which forms the western boundary of their present territory, about the middle of the eighteenth century, and travelled north and east until they established their first headquarters near Kasama, the present administrative centre of the Bemba country. From the sociological point of view, their history

9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

The success of the movement was from the first overwhelming. It completely captured the people's imagination, and created its myths as it spread. From hut to hut of an evening men shouted the latest exploits of the witch-finders—the number of horns found in such and such a village, or the people miraculously saved from snakes or lions. The Government, which at first allowed the movement to proceed unchecked, was universally praised. 'This is the best thing the Bwanas have ever done for us,' many natives told me. 'Now at last they are allowing us to free our country from witchcraft.' Adverse criticism of missions which refused to allow their Christians to drink the medicine was frequent. The suspicion, and often the accusations of witchcraft commonly made against unpopular Christian teachers, seemed at last to be publicly substantiated. 'If they have nothing to fear,' the natives said, 'why are they afraid to put themselves to the test?' At the cross-roads outside each village was a pile of horns and other magic objects—horns which many missionaries had tried unsuccessfully for years to remove and forbid.

The cause of the success of this movement is therefore of considerable interest, the more so since it is in many ways typical of many such organizations of witch-finders which have sprung up in other parts of Africa. We have to ask ourselves first, then, why the methods of the *Bamucapi* appealed to the natives so strongly? To what fears did they seem to provide such an immediate and universal panacea? These are questions that cannot be answered by a study of the ritual and myths of the *Bamucapi* as an end in themselves. To assess the strength of the movement in any particular area we have to consider it against a background of tribal structure and belief.

In the Bemba country, for instance, it may be said that novelty was enough to account for the success of any native movement, religious or secular. The Babemba are known to be unusually credulous and unstable in temperament, the first to adopt and discard anything new. Nyasaland, the reputed home of the movement, has also a high reputation among Rhodesian natives as the land of high wages and educational facilities, and most of the clerks employed in the country are still of Nyasaland origin. Further, the Babemba are among those African peoples with whom every form of Europeanism is a positive cult. The *Bamucapi* appealed because they presented a dogma that

9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the widespread use of protective magic which is, I believe, the important practical issue. In an atmosphere of suspicion and hatred, natives will believe themselves forced to buy charms from the reputable *yanga* of the neighbourhood, or very commonly from a witch-doctor of another tribe, to protect themselves (*kufilika mubili*), such charms being naturally viewed with alarm by others. In such an atmosphere of mistrust, too, ordinary magic of success, hunting, and agricultural charms, or those for luck in personal relations, such as formed the bulk of the horns on our heap, assume a sinister aspect. Beauty magic bought by a young unmarried girl is not a dangerous possession, but the same charm purchased by one of two jealous co-wives would be considered a hostile act. All magic of luck and self-protection becomes dangerous, that is to say, just in so far as the success it brings is believed to hurt another. Protective magic, like protective armaments, increases the sense of insecurity it was bought to end. Herein lies the danger, especially as contact with white civilization has, in many cases, actually increased the use of such charms and counter-charms.

A little consideration will in fact show us, what is not at first sight evident, that a change in the native belief in sorcery inevitably follows changes in social structure. The strength of the fear of witchcraft in any community obviously depends on the nature of its tribal institutions.

It is clear that the strength of the belief in the power of sorcery in any community depends on the nature of its tribal institutions and, in particular, the type of authority exercised, and its legal machinery. Its incidence will vary with its system of social grouping, local or kinship, and the absence or presence of emotional tension between these groups. To explain by a contrast between two widely different cultures, the Trobriand Islander is afraid his chief may bewitch him, and hence magic acts in this community as a conservative force backing up his authority. Witchcraft has its appointed place in the whole political system. The Mubemba, living under a far more autocratic and powerful chief, says simply, 'Why should a chief bewitch a commoner since he can so easily beat him or mutilate him?' Evans-Pritchard, in fact, suggests that we shall find an interesting correlation between the morphology of magic and the type of political system in a primitive society.[1]

[1] Evans-Pritchard, 'The Morphology and Function of Magic', *American Anthropologist*, Oct. 1929.

9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

754 The presence or absence of legal machinery for settling grievances
182 obviously also affects the incidence of magic throughout the society.
The Melanesian often has no way of venting his grievance against his
● 121 fellows except by the practice of the magic of hate. The Mubemba, in common with most other Bantu peoples, can obtain redress in a legal court. He brings a case where the former would besiege the sorcerer for more and more spells.

Again there are patterns of culture in which two social groups are legally bound together in a network of obligations mutually burdensome, and providing perpetual cause for emotional tension. Two individuals may be placed by society in a position of constant rivalry from the start. In such an atmosphere suspicion and charges of witchcraft flourish. I will instance only from the same two Melanesian societies, the relation in Trobriand matrilineal society between a man's heir, his maternal nephew, and his son; or in Dobu the hostility between the groups united in marriage (*susu*) between which the fear of witchcraft is an absolutely dominating dread. Among the Babemba differences in the marriage and kinship system do not provide groupings with interests so sharply contrasted, although the co-wives in a society where the women have never really accepted polygamy as an institution, or the rival heirs to great chieftainships, are always suspected of bewitching each other. But I believe conflicting elements in the society have lately increased.

This is, in fact, the crux of the whole matter. Missionaries all over Africa are teaching a religion which casts out fear, but economic and social changes have so shattered tribal institutions and moral codes that the result of white contact is in many cases an actual increase in the dread of witchcraft, and therefore in the whole incidence of magic throughout the group.

754 In Bemba society the position of the chief has materially altered.
182 One of his functions was formerly the administration of the poison
121 ordeal (*mwafi*) to those accused of sorcery, and this gave an ultimate
622 sense of security to the community at large. Now he no longer performs this duty, and his subjects know, moreover, that they cannot charge a witch in a legal court, black or white. 'No one will help us now', said an informant about the *Bamucapi* movement, 'unless we help ourselves.' It must be remembered, too, that divination, itself an

9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

essential part of the native system of fixing guilt, can no longer be publicly practised. It exists, but is discredited, and in this transition stage its loss has certainly robbed the native of some of his old moral certainties.

Further, with alterations in the sanctions for the power of the chief —his wealth, military supremacy, and the belief in his supernatural powers—that attitude to authority, on which, as we saw, tribal morality so largely depended, has been rudely shaken, and with it the whole system of beliefs in supernatural punishment for wrong-doing. Some natives are abandoning tribal rules because they find them burdensome; and some are living in conditions where it is impossible to carry them out—perhaps working at a mine too far to be able to care for their kinsmen or to carry out certain religious rites. Other natives again, many of them Christians, are caught between clashing moralities. In either case the majority are suffering, I believe, from a perpetual sense of guilt, expressing itself in a constant anxiety for some kind of supernatural defence. Nowhere did I feel this more strongly than in the most civilized part of Northern Rhodesia, the copper belt. Here a Bemba woman no longer feels it necessary to keep the wearisome taboos for the protection of her household fire, but just for that reason she feels herself bound to pay as much as she can for protective charms to save the life of her child—'just in case'. The influence of wage-earning is here again all-powerful. Money seems to the urban native his only asset in this insecure world. By it he can in effect exchange a belief in a system of ancestral spirits who demand respect, the performance of exacting ceremonial, and the keeping of tribal morality for safety bought on a hard cash basis open to all who have money, whatever their position in the society. What wonder, then, that he rushes to the seller of charms? And wherever protective magic is freely bought and sold there is an atmosphere of mutual suspicion between individuals. The fear of witchcraft increases, and witch-finders flourish.

Again, social grouping has been altered by white contact, with, as a transition stage, new causes of hostility between the individual components. In villages near European settlements, natives from other areas have intruded on original kinship units because they want to live near their work. 'We don't feel safe in this village. There are so many strangers here', an old woman said to me in a village near

9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

Kasama. In the mines it is the tribal admixture which is, I believe, at the basis of the natives' positive obsession by the fear of witchcraft. Each tribe credits the other with absolutely diabolical powers. Paralysed by the fear of the unknown, what can they do but buy more charms? Moreover, wage-earning in a large industrial undertaking provides opportunity for advance through individual initiative, and hence jealousy is rife. I know few successful clerks raised above the heads of their fellows who have not been accused at one time or another of sorcery. 'How else did he gain the bwana's favour?' is the natural question. And it is in the ranks of such men that, paradoxically enough, the most money is spent in the purchase of protective charms. I know of one ex-Government clerk in the Kasama area who had spent a Government bonus of £15 on the purchase of protective magic from a neighbouring tribe. Jealousy of the man who has adapted himself more quickly than his fellows to Europeanism is, I believe, inevitable in this transition stage.

Here, then, we must leave our study of the *Bamucapi* movement. We have seen that part of the success of these charlatans was due to their clever blend of the old and the new, and I believe that such a combination will be almost invariably found in modern witch-finder movements. Added to this we must reckon the cleverness of a technique that drew from a village its harmless as well as its dangerous horns, and by the multiplicity of charms thus produced increased the sense of the risk the whole community had run. An analysis of the horns collected led us to doubt the existence of sorcerers proper in the community, a doubt confirmed by a study of Bemba belief as to the supernatural causes of death and disaster. But native belief in witchcraft, and the widespread use of protective magic and counter-charms of all kinds, was confirmed. This latter I believe to have been actually increased by contact with the white civilization, and the resultant economic and social changes in Northern Rhodesia. Hence follows the success of modern movements of witch-finders, movements which are, I believe, inevitable as a product of violent changes in tribal organization and belief.

AUDREY I. RICHARDS.